

# Alberta Cowpoke Turns Doctor



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By GUY WEADICK, High River, Alta.



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The Author as it may, there was one Alberta cowhand who early decided that cowpunching as he had known and enjoyed it was passing from the scene to be continued mostly under fence and under a far different routine than he had experienced and liked. So, he decided he would move into another field of endeavor that in his opinion had great possibilities in his own Province of Alberta. Once having made that decision he started in with every intention of reaching the top of the ladder in that particular line of business which sometimes brands its top hands with the degree of Doctor. No, not a vet or dentist or a doctor of medicine, rather a Doctor of Philosophy—an expert upon land formations which greatly help to reveal what lies under the surface of the earth with emphasis upon minerals, gas and oil.

The ex-cowhand to whom I am now referring is none other than Dr. J. O. G.

Sanderson of Calgary, originally of Medicine Hat where his family were among the pioneer settlers in that district and who for many years were active in the livestock industry when the range was open and wide.

Dr. Sanderson is today recognized as one of Canada's leading geologists—one who no doubt has spent more active time in the field exploring Western Canada's various localities as to their underground hidden wealth than any other individual.

"Pete" Sanderson, as he is best known to his countless friends, springs from a truly pioneer Western Canadian family or families. Both his grandfathers were early settlers on the frontier of Western Canada. His father's father was James Francis Sanderson, a free trader and freighter, all the way from Selkirk across the plains to the Medicine Hat country where he settled in the early '80's. He built the first livery stable in the "Hat" and conducted it along with his livestock interests from his arrival until 1895.

Pete's father, Owen, was the eldest son of J. F. Sanderson. As a youth he built quite a reputation as a clever jockey and all-round horseman, first in riding with great success his father's string of fast-running horses (many of the early ranchers prided themselves with the fast horses they kept) and later

on as a top hand in breaking bronks. Owen Sanderson died in 1907 of bronchial pneumonia, having contracted it when left afoot on the range by a played-out horse he was riding in a storm.

Pete's mother was the eldest daughter of the noted early day Mountie and stock inspector who ranged from Maple Creek to Gleichen for twenty years—John Henry Gresham Bray, who was also the father of the two well-known cowboys of the Medicine Hat district, Harry and Reg Bray.

Both of Pete Sanderson's grandfathers; J. F. Sanderson and J. H. G. Bray, were fast friends. They were responsible for the organization in 1896, of one of the first Stock Growers' Associations in Western Canada which was later amalgamated with the present Western Stock Growers' Association. J. F. Sanderson was the first President and J. H. G. Bray was the first Secretary and Manager, a position he held for about five years. Pete has the original minute book of that organization. It contains much of interest as to the early Association.

Pete got his early schooling in Medicine Hat where among his schoolmates were Jesse Day, a brother of Ad Day the rancher, as well as with Addison Perry Day, Jr. (sometimes called "Boy" Day) and Horace Day. Both were sons of Ad Day. They all became fast friends and young Sanderson spent much of his spare time on horseback, riding with the Day boys.

Ad Day supplied a lot of the livestock used at "The Stampede" in its original presentation in Calgary in 1912 and naturally young Sanderson wanted to see the show. Leaving school flat on its face, young Pete talked a friendly C.P.R. conductor into furnishing him with transportation to Calgary. Upon his arrival he contacted me, saying he was with his uncles the Bray boys, Harry and Reg, who had entered a relay string in

the contest, and obtained a pass to the grounds for the week as a groom with the Bray stock.

Harry Bray let him sleep in a box stall to watch the tack and equipment of the boys and this, together with bringing him into close touch with the visiting cowboys from the Medicine Hat range, gave the young fellow quite a kick. He thought he was sitting on top of the world.

Pete's return to school at Medicine Hat was followed by trips to the Day and other ranches in between school dates and it was only natural that during the 1913 summer holidays he was to be found along with Boy Day around the Day livestock which was being readied for "The Stampede" to be held in Winnipeg in August. Both he and Boy Day had saddle mounts and were soon trying to duplicate the stunts in fancy and trick riding executed by both Otto Kline and Johnny Mullens who were working out a string of horses suitable



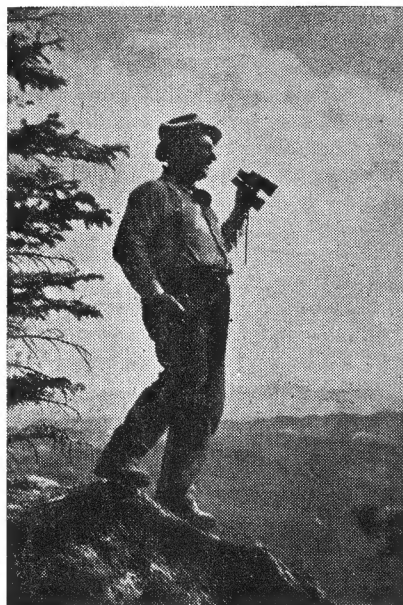
J. O. G. "Pete" Sanderson as a bronc buster.

for trick riding to go to the Winnipeg contest. Both boys and their horses turned up at Winnipeg.

Although both boys were young they had been around stock enough to savvy what not to do and soon had worked their way into assisting in the corralling and moving of Stampede stock on the grounds and in making themselves generally useful. That year we brought a genuine range chuckwagon to Winnipeg with a real roundup cook in charge and it was at this wagon on the grounds that all the cowboys working on stock, chutes, etc., were fed. In this way young Sanderson got his meals during the big show and as well picked up extra money for his work.

At "The Stampede" in Winnipeg in 1913 we had the cream of the world's crop in both fancy roping and trick riding and the young Medicine Hat team of Pete Sanderson and Boy Day worked in to show what they had picked up in the way of lessons from Otto Kline, then the World's Champion Trick Rider. The result was that they sprang a new novelty with both boys working on the one horse at the same time. One of their stunts was for Boy Day to stand erect in the saddle with both hands high in the air while Sanderson did a back-drag with his hands picking up gravel and throwing it in the air as he hung head down with the horse galloping down the track at full speed. It was a stunt that always brought tremendous applause from the crowded stands as well as from the professional trick riders who admired the earnestness of the two young riders.

In 1914 when Pete and Boy Day were herding the Ad Day string of bucking horses on the range around Eastend, Saskatchewan, Ad and Pete Strong were drilling an oil well in the vicinity. Hanging around the well in off times when not herding the bronks, young Sanderson became interested in oil drilling and geology. He read up on it some between



"Pete" Sanderson as a field geologist.

times when schooling and ranching did not conflict.

In 1915 he, along with A. J. Bryson, rode on the roundup with the 76 Outfit where Ira Triplett was wagon boss under Harry Otterson who was manager for Ryan and Fares. In 1916 he still furthered his cowpunching education while riding on the Sage Creek range with Art Barton on the old Day place where the brands used were Cross Z and Crossed Walking Canes. Pete gained a lot of information regarding bronks from Bill Brooks who worked for Ad Day in 1912-13-14.

1917 found Sanderson working on Milk River and later with Vern McLean on Lost River. That year he won the Southeastern Alberta bronk riding held at Manyberries. He used a double-rigged Gallup and Frazier saddle which Emery LaGrandeur had given him in 1913. In 1918 he was a top hand for the Milk River Cattle Co. near Pinhorn. Later he hired out to Knight and Watson who

were ranging stock on the Blood Reserve and the Kircaldy ranch. The cowhands were drawing down \$45 per month and found. Pete collected \$75 as he was riding the rough string. Art Barton was the ramrod and the first horse he cut to Sanderson was known as the "Milk River Black," a half-Percheron raised by Ray Knight—a horse Paul Hester will no doubt recall as they say Paul had tried to break him out as a three-year-old without success. They kept him around to mount new hands on. He was a big, strong horse and later became a well-known contest horse used in Chicago and many other contests in the United States.

All during these range engagements Pete kept up his studies, returning to the University of Alberta in 1919. He took out the week to attend "The Stampede" at Calgary to act as pick-up man along with others, among them his uncle, Harry Bray, whom I shall always regard as one of the best pick-up men—always well-mounted for the purpose—I have ever seen and I have looked at a lot of them through the years. At that contest Pete also rode for the fancy roping of the late Chester A. Byers, the acknowledged top fancy roper of all time who roped at Calgary that year.

Every season since 1919, just thirty years ago, Pete Sanderson has done active work in geology in the field in the Canadian Northwest in practically all localities. His studies on that subject were made at the University of Alberta from 1917 to 1923, with the exception of 1918; at Yale University in 1924-25-26, and at Toronto University 1926-28.

He was employed on the Great Slave Lake exploration in 1920 by the Imperial Oil Co. as well as by both the Provincial and Dominion Governments during the years 1921-22 and 1924-26, and again by the Imperial Oil Co. from 1927 to 1932. Since that time he has operated

as a free-lance and consulting geologist conducting his own office at Calgary. During the past sixteen years he has handled many big jobs for leading oil companies such as Home Oil Co., Shell Oil Co., Socony Vacuum and many others including local Alberta companies and top-flight American oil producing companies.

Pete Sanderson has never found it necessary to leave Alberta, either to get work or obtain experience. Distant oil fields have never been an attraction to him. He says there is much right here in Western Canada that is well worth the active study of any geologist. His success in his chosen profession in his own part of the world amply demonstrates the logic of his contentions. The strikes made by companies for whom he has acted and is acting give stronger testimony than words.

Sanderson claims that if a geologist hops, skips and jumps to too many locations he is apt to get Persia, Iran or Peru mixed up with turbans, fez and snowshoes and this might easily cause a geologist to wind up being morose. Could be!

Although a busy and successful geologist, Pete Sanderson remains a cowhand at heart. He still numbers among his friends many of the old-time ranchers of Alberta and some of the early-day cowhands who were prominent in the cowboy contest field. In addition he is still a genuine rodeo fan and whenever possible attends to watch the performances of the present-day aspirants for prize money, trophies and titles.

And although he carries the official brand of "Doctor" in the geology herd, which apparently stamps him as a top hand in that profession, he is still known as "Pete" Sanderson from Medicine Hat to a great many who wouldn't know whom you were talking about if you referred to him as "Doctor" Sanderson.



